

CHILD STUDY

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HEADLINES

Can we establish certain character traits in children by good habit training? And what constitutes "good habit training"? In recent years these questions have forced themselves upon thoughtful parents for whom magic formulas have failed to bring the promised panaceas. The pros and cons of both these questions are presented in this issue.



Arthur L. Swift, Jr., who contributes the editorial, is Associate Professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary. Dr. William E. Blatz, who defends his point of view in an open letter, is Director of the St. George's School for Child Study, University of Toronto, and author of the widely discussed book on the Dionne quintuplets, "The Five Sisters." Mrs. Anna W. M. Wolf, of the Family Consultation Service of the Child Study Association, presents an opposite point of view in her article on habit training. Dr. C. Anderson Aldrich, a pediatrician and professor at Northwestern University, and his wife, Mary M. Aldrich, are the authors of the highly praised new book, "Babies Are Human Beings."



In recent years, in America particularly, the diminished rôle of the father in family life has created new problems of emotional adjustment. The March issue will discuss *The Forgotten Father*.



CHARACTER AND THE COMMUNITY

LONG AGO we gave up the notion that character could be concocted of measured amounts of such traits as honesty, cleanliness, industry, and obedience instilled at stated intervals through "habit training." Character, we know, is the way individuals regularly behave as a result of the kinds of experience they have had both with people and with things. We are sure that very little children are most strongly influenced by the attitudes and feelings of others toward them. They must deeply and surely feel that they are wanted. And they must find a real measure of approval for what they are and do. These things in an ordered and dependable small world are the conditions requisite to wholesome growth toward adolescence.

EVER larger numbers of parents are aware of the importance of these environing factors. But we are likely to err in two particulars. We forget that not childhood alone, but adolescence and young manhood and womanhood as well demand these steady and reassuring influences if maturity is to be richly and soundly attained. And we fail to realize how much the wider community presses in to warp and to negate our efforts to create and to sustain these influences. Even the nursery feels the strain and pressure of an outer world that challenges its security and sweet reasonableness. But as the years go by it becomes harder and harder either to keep this real world out or to reconcile it with the home-made world within. And for us as parents and teachers and friends the struggle to build character does not end when our children grow beyond their childhood. In a very real way it is then intensified. What does this mean for us?

WE CAN no longer afford to ignore the fact that our mechanized world has room for ten thousand robots to every free man or woman it receives; that it has no room nor any use at all for hundreds of thousands of youth, except in time of war. Two things we must do. We must, so far as possible, in nursery, in school, and in college, make these grim realities little by little understood, that they may be challenged. And we must join with youth in more earnest effort to build a community in which to be truly wanted and sincerely appreciated is not for the majority an impossible dream.

Arthur L. Swift, Jr.

Habits Belong to Children

By C. ANDERSON ALDRICH, M.D., and MARY M. ALDRICH

THE parent or physician who attempts to think of children in terms of their growth will automatically become involved in a somewhat painful process of orientation on the subject of habit training. For if we accept the fact that the dynamics of these young individuals are worth taking into account, then we will be obliged to take the phrase "habit training" out of its traditional setting, to examine some of the verbiage that has grown up around it, and to recondition it to fit more accurately the reality of human development.

Perhaps the first of these traditional concepts to be appraised is the idea that habit formation is something that adults *do* to children. This common assumption was recently illustrated by a discouraged mother who came into my office for advice about her three-year-old daughter.

"I've been a complete failure in training my child," she said. "She fusses and fights when I put her at the table for meals, she refuses to lie down and go to sleep when she should, and we always have a battle when I make her go to the toilet. All her life, since the day she left the hospital, we have tried in every way to train her into correct habits. And now she won't eat, she won't sleep, she won't do anything she ought to. What shall I do?"

When, in our conversation, I brought up the question of how babies themselves naturally managed such matters, she expressed complete surprise. She had no idea that there was such a thing as a natural time for habit training, nor could she imagine that her baby could ever accomplish anything without instruction.

The discouragement of this young woman was by no means unreasonable. For the concept that adults must furnish a child's motive power implies that the imposing of habits, at least in respect to the essential functions of eating, sleeping and eliminating, is entirely a matter of our responsibility; and that if a baby resists or if he is unable to live up to these standards at the proper time, it is a serious reflection on his parents.

Conscientious parents have naturally struggled to avoid such failure and this very struggle has tended

to lay stress on habit training as an end in itself, regardless of its effect on the baby. Arbitrary sleep schedules, for instance, have been set up in our modern techniques, and as a result parents are made to feel guilty if an infant refuses to abide by these rules, although it is known that individual sleep needs vary greatly, and that no healthy baby is willing to lie quietly with his eyes closed after he is slept out.

Again, the idea that training routines are entirely a matter of imposition has led to the general assumption that habits acquired sooner are necessarily better. It has been a customary procedure in the last few years, for instance, to attempt toilet training as early as possible, even at the age of six weeks. It is only recently, through increasing knowledge of growth and development, that we are coming to see that training which is given before a child is equipped to respond is more likely to lead to confusion than to efficiency, and that this premature teaching of bowel and bladder routines may be a contributing factor in the imperfect control of these functions in later years.

Most traditional of all, however, is the feeling that the baby who most easily takes on imposed training is necessarily the better baby. Even this highly respected belief is being challenged by growing evidence that it is the over-conforming child who often becomes a serious problem later on. A vigorous infant never allows his growth tendencies to be ignored without a struggle.

The disconcerting way in which science brings along new evidence to push out old beliefs, from time to time, is undoubtedly a healthy exercise in flexibility for those of us who are engaged in caring for that rapidly changing organism, the child. But the loss of these cherished convictions naturally leads us to question what we may put in their place, and whether there is any solid basis of fact upon which we may rely in conducting children through these important early years.

For an answer to this question we are indebted to those students of growth who have gone directly to the child himself, and who, as a result, are constantly stressing the practical fact that in every child, a mechanism exists, the purpose of which is to control

his own developmental progress. It is this mechanism which, if fostered, will lead to a competent and lasting set of habits. In other words, the key to a child's successful habit formation lies within him.

The fact, then, that each child must grow according to an intricate and rigid plan of his own development, has a definite bearing on the establishing or changing of his routines. For as nerves, muscles and brain mature, and as the various parts of his body increase in size and improve in function, his growing abilities will at intervals be capable of operating on progressively higher levels. And it is at these particular stages or maturation points that we may find opportunities for initiating successful habit training. When we make use of the baby's abilities as they emerge, and adjust our regimes to his rhythm of development, we introduce a form of training to which he can naturally respond. We would not expect him to drink from a cup, for instance, until his fingers and arms have developed sufficient muscular coordination to hold it. It is this synchronizing of our training with his growth which helps to make his routine acts fundamentally satisfying to him.

His feeling of satisfaction and competence must always be taken into account in our training plans, because this is essential in a child's own scheme of habit formation. In the beginning, an infant is organized largely on a reflex basis, functioning through the spinal cord or mid-brain. His early acts are involuntary and automatic. Nevertheless, these simple responses do produce definite emotional reactions, which may be either pleasant or unpleasant. And it is the repetition of these emotional experiences which gradually brings about participation by the brain and elevates his behavior to conscious voluntary control. The voluntary acts which are pleasing will be repeated over and over again, and will in this way form the beginning of his habits.

IT IS important to recognize that in human activity there is no such thing as a purely physical function. Children can never be separated into physical, mental and emotional compartments. They always react as a whole. A child's responses are as much mental as physical, and the emotions involved in every act have much to do with the final efficiency of his habits.

The fact, then, that a developmental plan exists, and that true habits grow up through the satisfactory working out of this plan, suggests some points of practical importance for those who are concerned in the training of young children. First, there is a specific time in development when the baby is

ready to accomplish each of his vital acts; second, every child has his own individual rhythm for the performance of these essential functions; and third, his habits, to be successful, must give him satisfaction.

The process of elimination, so important for the baby's survival, may serve to illustrate these points. The baby moves his bowels according to a purposeful scheme. The contents travel through the small intestine until they reach the colon, where a spectacular reaction called the mass movement takes place. When this occurs, the whole lower end of the large intestine contracts into segments, while, with a sudden muscular effort, the bowel contents are forced down into the rectum. This distension of the rectum is uncomfortable to the baby who responds by fussing or crying, until, through the efforts of the voluntary and rectal muscles, he has a movement.

In this simple series of events we find a sequence which nature often uses in the development of satisfaction. An unpleasant situation is first established and is then relieved by voluntary muscular activity. This relief of pain is pleasurable to the baby, and when the act is repeated over and over again he learns to get comfort by moving his bowels whenever he feels the painful mass movement. In this way, as has been said, gratifying experience leads to the habit of elimination.

The rhythmic element is also a part of the process. At first the mass movements take place two or more times a day, but according to the dictates of his growth plan they tend to come less often as he grows older. At six months they average only twice a day and at a year but once. The exact hour of the day at which the movements take place, however, will vary in individual children, although they tend to come around meal-times.

But the stage of the baby's general development must be taken into account as well as the time of day. The requirements of toilet training would seem to specify that we wait until his growth has made him ready to sit up alone on the seat, and also until his brain is mature enough to understand what is expected of him. While in general this capacity comes at about six months, babies vary in this respect also. Some will be delayed, a few will be advanced, but experience has shown that eventually they all get there.

To summarize then: consistent toilet training lies in waiting until the periods of the mass movement have established themselves in the child's daily rhythm, and in conditioning him to the toilet seat when he is able to sit up and to understand our in-

strutions. If these steps are taken at the proper time and with our confident approval, we may depend upon him to take care of the matter of gratification. In this way a permanent habit is established, which belongs to the baby although it is fostered and participated in by his mother.

A habit of this sort, which begins back in the automatic stage and develops successfully into conscious behavior, is the kind of serviceable asset which may be taken for granted as a child grows up. I remember asking the mother of several children when one of them had his daily bowel movement. Apologetically, she replied, "I haven't the slightest idea. Since they first became trained they have always taken care of themselves. They all go regularly, but I don't know when." This is exactly as it should be.

The process of elimination has been used to show what true training is and how it comes about. In the formation of any other essential habit, however, a similar plan is at work and its maturation points are clearly indicated. If we study the growth of the baby's feeding habits, for instance, we find much the same picture.

THE motive power back of all eating habits is appetite. We know little about the origin of this internal governor, but we do know that it grows through satisfying experience at meals and that its function is to control the amount and kind of food eaten. When this active force is interfered with, or when its dictates are not respected, the compulsion to eat is lost and every step of a child's eating program suffers accordingly.

Eating is based on a rhythm initiated by the hunger pain soon after birth. This pain, due to an empty stomach, calls out the warning signal of the hunger cry. As a rule, the cry brings food, the baby is warmed and soothed in his mother's arms, his nursing reflexes are immediately put to work, and the end result is one of the most complete pictures of satisfaction we are ever likely to see—a comfortable baby with a full stomach. It is the repetition of this sequence which brings out the meal-time rhythm and begins the development of appetite. But even in so early a picture we see a variation in individual children, some requiring food every three hours while others favor the four-hour schedule.

During his first few weeks the baby takes about six meals every twenty-four hours. But as he grows older he embarks upon a program of gradually cutting down the number of these feedings until he reaches the mature level of three meals a day. And it is in

this cutting down that the conflict over feeding habits often begins. There is a maturation point involved in each instance, but in our routines this fact has too often been unrecognized.

Many hospitals, for instance, routinely eliminate the 2 A. M. feeding at birth, arbitrarily ignoring empty stomachs and hunger cries. But any one who has heard the nightly protest which ebbs and flows from a hospital nursery of this sort, will have to admit that this regulation does not meet the emotional needs of its babies. Such lack of regard for growth is unnecessary. For every satisfied baby who is not hurried in this matter will sleep through the 2 A. M. feeding of his own accord before he is six weeks old. He "trains" himself at this point.

In the same way the baby will arrive at the stage where he will do away with the 10 P. M. feeding. In his own plan of development this milestone will be reached when he is from five to seven months old, depending on his individual requirements. Unless there is some potent family or nutritional reason, therefore, the time to train him to omit this meal is when the child himself sleeps through, thus indicating the change.

The final step to the three-meal-a-day regime also depends upon his progressive maturity in sleep habits. During the first year a baby seems to find it necessary to sleep after eating, a custom of which his family heartily approves. He is particularly tenacious of his mid-morning nap, following a bottle. After a long night's sleep one would expect him to be willing to stay awake all morning, but for some unknown reason this developmental step is delayed. He takes at least a year to get to the point where, of his own accord, he stays awake and thus shows that he is ready for the three-meal regime, with dinner at noon. If we try to hurry him, he either falls asleep in his play pen or nods over his food.

There are other signposts in the baby's feeding progress which indicate when to introduce new types of food and new methods of eating. The developmental time to give a child soft cereal with a spoon is when his tongue has developed to the point where it can convey food from the front of his mouth back to his throat. This feat is impossible to a newly born baby but is usually easy for a four-months-old. In the same way, the time to present lumpy or solid food is when the jaws develop their chewing reflex, early in the teething days.

There is considerable argument over early training in the use of tools for eating: the cup and spoon. In

(Continued on page 132)

The Fetish of Habit Training

By ANNA W. M. WOLF

IT used to be the fashion among young people a generation ago to gloat over G. B. Shaw's exciting denunciations of family life. "Those enlarged rabbit hutches, which we call homes," I remember was a phrase which brought a look of distress to our parents' faces. Or we announced that we felt thoroughly frustrated by "the enervating atmosphere of love and kindness," which according to Shaw was sapping our youthful spirit of adventure. Looking back, all this ferment now seems to me to have been well worth while.

Yet today young people have new concerns. Perhaps too many have tasted the fruits of broken homes and are well aware of the destruction which follows. Perhaps the troubles of the outside world have caused us all to cherish more closely the personal relationships which alone seem to give life meaning. Whatever the cause, it seems true that after subjecting family life to a much needed purge of what Shaw called "middle class morality," there has been a growing awareness of the indispensable values which are bound up with it. We are interested, too, in how those values may be conserved.

Young people today want to build their homes solid, to avoid the mistakes of their parents, to know their children, and to start them off sound in mind as well as in body. To this end and true to the spirit of the age, we turn to science to enhance our understanding of human motives and problems. What sort of a thing is a child? What does he need? How does he learn? What are the common pitfalls, and how can we avoid them? More and more parents are honestly reading, thinking and struggling to find answers to these queries and to make these answers work. They soon learn that successful living together in families is a matter of art as well as science, of wisdom as well as knowledge. They are compelled to wonder what particular mistakes are characteristic of our day and age. What significant factors in human development is *our* philosophy neglecting? Let us hazard some guesses.

There is too much talk about "habit training"—it is not really basic in character development.

In our search for the emancipation of childhood, we have not understood either the relation between freedom and authority in children's lives, or the foundations on which our controls must rest.

Furthermore, we (and I mean parent-educators and most psychologists along with parents) have underrated first, the role of maturation itself in resolving certain so-called problems of childhood, and second, the part played by the emotions in everything the child does or that his parents do to him. This failure to conceive of the child as an organism developing and changing under his own power, so to speak, and in addition, as a being who has certain emotional conflicts which he must face regardless of how favorable the environment, has resulted in a confusion to which psychologist, psychiatrist and physician have all contributed. There is too much teaching which seems to imply that the child's personality is a blank when he first makes his appearance in the world and that he can be wholly made or marred by the way his parents train him.

If a four-year-old hates his baby sister, if a nine-year-old still rushes to school without brushing his teeth, if a toddler refuses his vegetables, if brothers and sisters quarrel or defy their elders, parental training we are told has gone wrong somewhere. With the right techniques correctly applied, so runs the lesson, good "habit patterns" can be established during the earliest years, and, once they are established, the foundations of sound personality have been laid.

At first young parents eagerly accepted the challenge offered by this view. Out came the thumb-guard at the first appearance of the dreadful habit of thumbsucking; infants were uniformly forced to "cry it out" when they signalled their woe during the watches of the night; bladder and bowel training was begun very early and followed a strict schedule. Children were required to eat everything that was put before them or else— More recently these practices have been toned down somewhat, and fortunately for all concerned a humanitarian note has crept in. Fortunately, too, common sense and humor have always been applied in addition to the rules. Yet the fact remains that the fundamental premise which still persists in most quarters, is that good habits are the basis of personality and character. A large number of child training experts have had no larger vision than to regard their task as that of diligently and consistently instilling good habits as early as possible, while the child is yet young. Habits of neatness, habits of punctuality, habits of truth telling, habits

of unselfishness, habits of independence, even habits of reading good books, are frequently referred to as if they were matters of mechanical training to be engraven early and faithfully on the young child's mind, after which it is assumed that nothing can eradicate them.

One does not quarrel with the view that parents should teach their children decent and civilized ways of living. But difficulties arise when we assume that all of these modes of behavior are "habits" and can be placed on an automatic level as a type of conditioned response. Strictly speaking, they are not habits at all but highly complex attitudes which must involve the life experience of the whole personality, if they are to be real. Most of them, indeed, can only be caught, not taught as one teaches tricks to a dog.

It is of great importance, moreover, that we should understand the gradualness with which character develops. While we need a concrete knowledge of the age when a child is emotionally as well as mentally ready to take the next step, we must know also that these ages differ with different children and different temperaments. This is an approach which too few genuinely adopt in their teaching, though many pay it lip service. Again and again parents seem to feel that they must proceed on the assumption that the earlier the training in a specific trait is undertaken, the more effective it will be. The whole principle of timeliness in teaching, of readiness to learn on the part of the changing and maturing human organism, as demonstrated by more careful workers, is rarely comprehended. Few attempts are made, for example, to discover through actual observation at what age bladder and bowel control are most quickly and easily learned. Advice of pediatrician and psychologist alike differs on this point, anywhere from beginning bowel training at three weeks to waiting until a year. Or they recommend the use of suppositories to force compliance, or that an infant be placed on a pot "when he can sit up without support," thinking wholly in terms of the child's physical comfort rather than in terms of a maturing nervous system. The significant researches of the psychoanalytic investigators concerning the effect on personality of the whole experience of early training in the control of eliminative function are passed by as of small consequence. Similarly, thumbsucking is just a "bad habit" to be broken as quickly as possible, without understanding the part which sucking plays in the emotional organization of the infant, and the possible by-products of thoughtless frustration. Many assume

without adequate evidence that such infantile sucking will permanently injure the normal alignment of the permanent teeth and are unaware of scientific studies with opposite conclusions.

Even more important, however, than a failure to grasp the principle that teaching, in order to be effective, must constantly be related to maturation is the persistence of the assumption that children are purely intellectual organisms, capable or incapable of learning certain techniques, without adequate comprehension of the dominant rôle played by the emotions not only in the learning process itself, but also in character formation in its deepest sense. Right through much of our current teaching—even teaching from highly reputable sources, even in those books which carry chapters called "The Child's Emotions"—children continue to be presented to us largely as products of mechanical nursery procedures.

There is, for example, the problem of family jealousies, both in the nursery and in later childhood and youth. Most teaching on this subject gives parents certain definite procedures to follow: First "prepare" the older child for the arrival of the new baby. Let him share in getting together clothing and other necessary items. When the baby comes, be sure to show the older child plenty of affection, lest he think the newcomer has usurped his place in his parents' hearts. All this is good advice and worth following if only there were added a word of warning that even when all these procedures are followed to the letter, we can only mitigate, not prevent, jealousy. Parents need to know that the birth of a new baby is almost certain to be a major problem for the older child, despite our best efforts. They need to know that in all likelihood the older child will strike or pinch or squeeze or push the baby, or wish he were dead either openly or silently, and that the burden of the conflict of hate and guilt engendered by all this, will play a lasting part in his life. They need to know that these jealousies are not always directly expressed, but are sometimes skilfully concealed by the older child, only to crop out indirectly through a variety of channels. Affection, it is true, gradually supplants hostility as the years go by, especially if the family life is the kind that fosters it, but the road may be long. They need to know that many behavior problems of childhood stem from these antagonisms, even when the antagonisms are masked. Sometimes children manage these problems with relatively little difficulty, yet problems they are, and after they have done their best, parents must do a deal of just standing by.

Similarly, we have too easily accepted the naïve view that fears and night terrors arise because children have had frightening experiences or because they are reacting to a fearful attitude in mother or nurse. Yet to any mother this explanation is inadequate. Her real need is for insight into the nature of the child's inner life, the unconscious conflicts characteristic of various phases of his development and the manner by which these become translated into fears. This is rarely offered. There remains a great deal that we still do not know about the origins of fears, and children continue to have them, as well as jealousies and hates, despite the best of management. In short, children come into the world with an assortment of primitive drives, impulses and wishes, which later become wholly unconscious, and many of their problems are normal problems and reside in the very nature of childhood. Whether these problems are wholesomely resolved or not, will, it is true, depend to a large extent on the child's early experiences and treatment at the hands of his parents. But these determining experiences are not essentially the formal and conscious habit training to which he has been subjected. Rather they revolve about all of his early feelings regarding his place in the family group, his relations to brothers and sisters, his response to the affection and interest—or lack of it—from his parents, and his beliefs as to whether he is welcomed and wanted as a vital part of their lives.

THIS brings us face to face with our problem of authority and discipline. For this feeling of wantedness in an atmosphere of parental warmth is the only base from which discipline with its inevitable frustrations can successfully operate. A child can accept deprivations only if he receives something in the place of those cruder ego gratifications which he is asked to forego. This something is first of all the approval of the parent, later that of his own peers, and finally, perhaps, that of his own conscience. At the same time although he cannot directly express it, no child wants to be allowed to run wild. The chaotic universe which results frightens him or precipitates him into nervous and fruitless exploits which result in a blighting sense of dissatisfaction and insecurity. Just as children need to be saved by adults from physical dangers, so they constantly ask us—if we know how to listen—to be saved from consequences, in shame and frustration, of their own primitive, unbridled impulses. If, from his earliest memories, a child finds himself in a position of easy dominance, where any sort of ruthlessness is regarded with

amused tolerance and selfishness with a shrug, if he never experiences those spontaneous and hearty resentments, hot off the griddle of real feeling, which should exist wherever the rights of others are violated, if the parent never censures, then the child himself is deprived of his future means of self-censure. Conscience is in essence the voice of the parent incorporated and made one with our own being; and if the voice of the parent is never raised, that inner voice fails to be born. This means that parents must be able to control when control is called for. They must be able to say "You must," or "You may not," when occasion demands it and see to it that on the whole their authority is accepted, though this authority must gradually be shifted to the child himself in accordance with his capacity to carry it. It is at this point that parental insight and experience count most heavily.

In the deepest sense it remains true that childhood is the golden period of personality formation. Whatever the direction given by our inherited constitution, our earliest experiences play an overwhelming part in determining whether later in life we feel happy or sad, are generous or mean, friendly toward others or hostile, suspicious or trusting, reasonable or stubborn, and how freely we can express or control our aggressive and our sexual impulses—in short, all that is most important in life. And these are the consequences not of direct and mechanized training, but of the feelings released in the family drama of the early years.

It is these matters then, to which parents' attention should be directed. All of the techniques and procedures so meticulously worked out to encourage good habits, all of the disciplinary methods contrived to discourage bad ones, are trivialities beside this drama of relationship. Whether to spank or not to spank, the endless discussions which go on about what to do when a three-year-old refuses to take his bath or when he wets his bed, or slaps the baby, are useless unless they serve to focus parents' attention first on the nature of a three-year-old and what it is fair to expect of him at this particular stage of development, and second, on the nature of the whole relationship between child and family. It has been truly said that both the best and the worst that we do to our children, we do unconsciously.

Parent education is essentially the task of educating the emotions. Rightly conceived it should revolve around the problem of releasing parents so that they can freely enjoy their children. It must liberate and arouse them so that they can do things with them,

have good times together, laugh, talk, work and play together, get angry at each other without excessive guilt, love each other without dependence. If the way is clear for these things, and if parents are able at the same time to confront children with their own mature standards, children will learn, not all at once, perhaps, but gradually as they mature, and with many

backslidings. Sound and responsible character comes not because children have been caught young and trained that way, but because they have been enabled, of their own free will, to give up their early egoistic and primitive wishes, through affectionate contacts with parents who themselves love and practice civilized living.

Some Reflections on Habits

By WILLIAM E. BLATZ, M.D.

At a discussion meeting on "Habits and Discipline" at the Child Study Association's 50th Anniversary Conference last November, Dr. Blatz presented a paper which stimulated a great deal of discussion. There was not time for him to develop further certain statements with which another paper, representing this Association's point of view, took issue. Accordingly, Mrs. Pilpel wrote to Dr. Blatz, asking him to contribute to CHILD STUDY an article keeping these questions in mind. His reply came in the form of an open letter which we print here in full.

Mrs. Cécile Pilpel
Director, Study Groups
Child Study Association

My dear Cécile:

I hope you will forgive the informality of this reply, but I am sure that, when you read over your letter to me, you had your tongue in your cheek. Here are the six questions you asked me to answer in "about 2000 words"!

- (1) My reasons for rejecting the concept of the unconscious. How I would, for example, explain the behavior of a child who shows extreme demonstrations of love for the baby brother along with some obsessive fears that some accident will befall him, and is subject to night terrors and other fears.
- (2) My point that "all learning takes place on the conscious level." You maintain that the most important things we learn are learned unconsciously.
- (3) My statement that character and self-discipline are developed by definite procedures, such as I described in the handling of tantrums. Your point of view is that character and personality are the product of the feelings and relationships which prevail in the family.
- (4) My view on the use of rewards and punishments.
- (5) Are certain virtues, such as neatness, independence, truthfulness, responsibility, and so on, developed largely by repeated practice of these virtues from the earliest years?
- (6) What is the role of "identification" in character development? When does it take place, or fail to take place?

Well, here goes:

(1) I do not reject the concept of the unconscious, but only a concept of the unconscious which makes it *do* things.

Let us look at the facts. Any description of consciousness must explain, among other things, (a) the spread of conscious alertness over the whole field, commonly discussed under the head of "attention," (b) the phenomenon of forgetting and remembering, which is a selective activity, (c) intermittent and delayed recalls with blocking, slips of the tongue, and so on. (a) Attention, or "selective emphasis," may be explained in terms of the immediate motivating condition of the individual. (b) The selective factor in forgetting may be studied in terms of the "values" which the individual places upon experiences. These values are developed through experience and are different for different individuals. "Pleasantness" and "unpleasantness" are only partially influential factors and by no means the most important. (c) The phenomenon of blocking and diversion may be explained in terms of the resolution of conflicts of the moment. In all these cases I do not see the necessity for assuming or predicating an "unconscious" as a dynamic factor. So much for consciousness as an academic concept. It leaves us still in the laboratory and rather sterile of ideas with reference to behavior itself. To fill out the picture of a human being we introduce to this academic picture the concept of "motivation."

We know that individuals are under the influence of a drive or impelling force or forces. One of these forces, let us say, is "hunger." We are wholly unconscious of the mechanism and its workings except that there is a definite sensory or conscious experience associated therewith. In other words there is an awareness of this urge, which as we grow up is interpreted as

"hunger." The individual derives meaning from his conscious experience. When he projects this experience into the world about him he thinks of food, or better, some particular food. This conscious phenomenon may be called an incentive or goal. He may be said to "wish" for a steak or an ice cream cone. The wish is conscious, the incentive is conscious, the motivating mechanism is unconscious. According to this definition there cannot be an "unconscious wish."

The behavior that is called forth is dependent upon the environmental and organic circumstances under which this individual is conscious of the urge to satisfy the motive. Thus his behavior will be different if there is food handy or not, or if food is available whether he is hungry or not. In any case one can describe his behavior and his experience in terms of conscious phenomena.

Another of these urges is the need for "rest." If the child feels tired and hungry at the same time and both food and a resting place are at hand, one can predict the child's behavior only if one knows the relative values, meanings or interpretations which the individual has placed on these experimental data.

One may enumerate these urges: attitudes, appetites, and emotions. In each case the individual is conscious of the urgency, if manifest. How otherwise could he ever learn to respond adequately to their demands? To say that there is an instinctive and hence unconscious technique by which these needs are satisfied is to belie the facts. As we grow up our "values" change, and enlarge. But in each case our behavior is dictated by the total past experience and specifically by the experience that we have had in connection with what we interpret as the present situation.

For example, you are walking towards a door talking animatedly with a friend and approaching the door you reach for the door knob, turn it, pull open the door, pass through with your friend, still talking animatedly. We might, perhaps say you performed this act "unconsciously," but I don't think you would agree with this interpretation; certainly I would not. Well then, at one time, unfamiliar with doors, you had to learn what a door knob looked like, how it turned, what it was for and so on. At that time you couldn't have opened the door while talking with a friend. You would have been occupied with solving the problem of opening the door.

The operation was performed, as described above, because this act had been performed so frequently that it could be carried on further and further from the focus toward the fringe of consciousness. Would you say that all of these learning acts or trials

resided in the unconscious? Yes, because obviously your performance is affected or influenced by every previous act of this nature from the first to the second-to-last. You cannot *recall* the first time you opened a door but it must have occurred. Does the "unconscious" come to our assistance under these circumstances and open the door for us? Of course not. But for the sake of giving the term some meaning one may define the "unconscious" as the sum-total of our past experience from whose influence we may never become wholly detached. The relative influence of specific experimental episodes depends upon the value which the individual places upon them *at the time* they are experienced or recalled. The unconscious thus is a "receptacle" rather than an "engine."

Now, as we grow up we become social. There are no social urges or motives and certainly no social incentives at birth. (All right, I'll argue this one out with you in the next 2000 word letter!) This social development is interesting because we find that the child uses the social environment to satisfy the needs already mentioned above. In so far as this environment is exceedingly complex in its permutations and combinations we would expect to find each of us differing more in this respect than in our asocial behavior.

But the learning obeys the same rules as mentioned above, viz., our immediate response is dependent upon our whole previous experience. We have forgotten a great many of the beginnings and most of the in-betweens, but—whether you call that the unconscious or not—their influence is governed by the laws of learning. All experience has passed through consciousness at some time or other.

One could explain all human behavior in terms of the three fundamental motivating forces—attitudes, appetites and emotions—and the derived social experiences, if one knew more about them. But there is no necessity to postulate another type of motivating factor, namely "the unconscious." This criticism is made, not because the concept of the unconscious makes the whole thing more complex, but rather because, in my opinion, it makes it too simple. Whenever one is baffled in an analysis of human behavior, call in the unconsciousness. (This is a frivolous letter, don't forget.)

(2) Now as to learning being on the conscious level: of course it is! Obviously the learning mechanism is unconscious; we are not conscious of *learning*, but of what we learn. If it were not in consciousness how could the learning proceed? Learning may be

defined as the modification of behavior (thinking is behavior) resultant upon the continuous relationship of the organism with the environment. The environment can affect the organism only through the senses. (Just lately I had occasion to discuss the case of a child who, through a spinal lesion at the age of four days, is incontinent, both as to bladder and bowel. Can you describe to me a technique by which the learning of control can take place in the unconscious?) Please don't assume from this that I think learning takes place in the naïve Stimulus-Response system of the earlier psychologists. We respond to the total awareness of the moment. Our interpretation of the situation is largely determined by the "object of perception" but the background of experience is there too. Often our interpretation is faulty and a relationship ensues which, upon recall or any form of reintegration, may assume a more significant place in the development of values than the "meaningful content" of the immediate awareness. For example, to use a common illustration, a child is handed a bottle at the same time that a loud bell is sounded. She interprets the bottle as the "cause" of the sound and refuses the bottle. At the time, the sound is in the center of consciousness the bottle moves in the background, but the child has derived the meaning "bottle-sound" and develops a "phobia." (Some people misguidedly call this conditioning.)

I cannot conceive of any learning taking place "unconsciously." You know of the attempt made to teach military cadets the Morse code by sounding it through earphones while they were asleep. It didn't work. You know of the experiment in which they observed a class of students learning to move their ears. In every case some sensory cue, visual or kinesthetic, had to be given, and the more sensory the cues the more rapid the learning.

Now for the case (in your first question): The behavior of the child towards her younger brother is dependent upon (a) the example set by the parents, (b) the gratification of the child's needs, and (c) the emotional development. The baby brother either prevents, impedes, or enhances the older sister's gratification. If the former, the child experiences a conflict and the resolution of the conflict may be in the direction of fears of some kind. The apprehensions expressed by the parents about accidents suggest the content of the fear. "Night terrors and other fears" are subject to the same kind of analysis, as so briefly (and inadequately) expressed above. I (or any one) can no more "explain" the situation which you describe, without additional data, than a doctor can diagnose the cause

of a headache over the telephone without asking for more information.

To assume that some type of unconscious mechanism is at work, skulking behind the consciousness, waiting for it to doze, so that it may pounce out and pin a "fear" on the individual is, to me, a gratuitous speculation. The point I wish to make is that there is no necessity to invent an "unconscious" as a substitute for ignorance. (Don't shoot!)

(3) Undoubtedly the character and personality of an individual are *partly* the product of the feelings and relationships which prevail in the family; but surely there are other ways and means by which the approved patterns may be demonstrated. In the teaching of arithmetic the teacher is of *some* use; it helps, of course, if the teacher knows some arithmetic and uses the concepts she is teaching to her pupils in her daily life. In other words, the teaching may be by example and by precept. I think that example is more efficacious but it is not enough. The *learning* is exactly the same whether the teaching is different in emphasis or not. If we were all allowed to do exactly as we wished then there would be no need for instruction of any sort; but there *are* useful patterns, of some of which we disapprove heartily. I think the trouble is that we disapprove of too many, especially in children. I'm sure you agree with me in this—or do you?

(4) Learning, as you will agree, goes on and on whether we want it to or not. Everything that affects our senses in some way changes us. The psychologist in the laboratory studies only a circumscribed area of the learning process. The teacher deals only with formal learning. The individual, sometimes, circumscribes his learning so that he may talk about it, think about it, or boast about it. "I wish I could drive a car"; "I've learned to play the Moonlight Sonata"; "I've just broken 80"; and so on. Now, there are two opportunities for gratification in learning; first, the more crystallized the goal, the more readily does one appreciate the ultimate success and enjoy it; but there is also the interest in the progress toward the goal. One may be said to have experienced the full satisfaction in learning (in living) if one is interested in the effort as well as the task.

Now then, if we, as teachers (whether parents or not), would only appreciate this fundamental fact, we would not arbitrarily emphasize the task at the expense of effort as we do by offering a reward. (The calf-bound copy of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as a prize in English composition is a sop to the self-

(Continued on page 130)

Readers' Page

Each month we present some contributions of our readers who have been thinking about child training and learning through both study and experience. We, the editors, may disagree with what is said as frequently as we approve it. But, in either case, we feel that the writers have a point of view which may prove stimulating to our readers. Anyone with something to say which may interest parents or teachers is cordially invited to send a contribution. In addition, we would welcome your comments on whatever appears in the columns of this magazine.

THE PROBLEM OF FOOD PREJUDICES

By LEN CHALONER, Chelsea, England

FROM his earliest days, the mother of a young baby is carefully instructed in the importance of his correct feeding. Meticulously planned schedules, changing week by week, hang at eye level above the baby's bath-time tray, and his weight chart and scales stand beside it. As he grows bigger, his mother's first thought on waking will be his orange juice, at least an hour before his breakfast. And as likely as not, her last thought at night will be concern for his spinach on the morrow. It is altogether to be wondered at if this same mother presently becomes overanxious when her child tends to develop behavior difficulties at mealtime or some food prejudices?

Admitting that this schedule business may have become something of a fetish, after all food is all important for the small child and a balanced diet a first passport to good health. If the toddler rejects some vital item like milk, or plays with his meals instead of eating them, there is a temptation to worry even though worrying is a contagious affair that produces reactions in the child. Indeed, the more carefully we look into the whole subject of food difficulties, the more it would seem that this emotional relationship between the child and the adults around him is the chief cause of these difficulties.

To begin with, we may pause to reflect on how very strong are the emotions of the baby in relation to his food. Feeding is at once the source of his greatest pleasure and correspondingly his greatest anxiety. For him, feedings mean not only satisfaction or pleasure, but even security; for his troubles fade at once with the coming of his food—sustained in his mother's comforting embrace and commanding

all her love and attention at this period, he is at peace with the world.

Imagine for a moment, then, his feeling when he wakes, perhaps with a little pain, and cries, and his mother fails to come. He knows nothing whatever of time, does not realize that a bottle has perhaps to be made ready, or that his mother is watching the clock and there is still twenty minutes to go until his feeding time. For him there exists only the food . . . or nothing. To him his mother is simply not there, or the food is being withheld—forever possibly—unless he can scream it there! He cannot bring it any other way.

It is easy to see how much emotion, even in favorable circumstances, can become enmeshed in this situation and develop from babyhood through the toddling period, or how easily anxieties and fears can become translated into mealtime difficulties. We have, moreover, only to look at half a dozen fairy stories, or folk lore tales, to realize that the act of "eating" can signify love or revenge. The ogre can devour, on the one hand, but on the other, an adult will say to a child, "I love you so much I could eat you up." To understand these things is to get new insight into many mealtime behavior problems.

Fortunately, nature gives us very broad hints on the subject of weaning, otherwise this would constitute a most difficult milestone. Even today, however, many mothers are very slow at seeing these admirable pointers or taking proper advantage of them.

As the first teeth begin to make their appearance, there comes also the baby's first urge to bite and chew. Here is the moment to offer zweibach, crusts, or toast on which he can satisfy his urge to bite and learn at the same time a new form of feeding. He feels no sense of deprivation for he is still getting his customary food without disturbance. The whole principle of weaning, no matter what detailed sequences are adopted, should be to accustom the child gradually to accept and digest a number of supplementary foods before becoming wholly dependent on them. In this way we should be able to avoid a battle in relinquishing the breast, with the subsequent digestive or emotional disturbances.

It is noticeable that few young children, even if they are fussy about a number of dishes, take exception to *crisp* foods. The most common food prejudices among toddlers are undoubtedly the half-soft foods

that are neither true solids nor yet fluid—the mushy greens, the soft rice puddings, or the soft cereals—items that in themselves have no marked taste and rather offend through their sleazy texture in the mouth. The fat on meat creates another common texture prejudice, but it becomes acceptable to most children in the form of dripping on bread. In the same way a crisp salad will be welcomed instead of cooked greens, or crisp baked cereals instead of soft boiled or steamed ones. The “skin” on the top of milk is another frequent texture dislike which may lead a child to dislike *all* milk subsequently. It has been put forward by a school of psychology that the skim on milk may unconsciously be associated in the child’s mind with the dry nipple of weaning. Be that as it may, there is pretty certainly both texture prejudice and association of ideas to be considered in most food difficulties.

Tomatoes cut in half, red meat, sausages, prunes, milk, soft greens, all can have ready associations for some children in this way. As they grow older, meat-eating difficulties in particular can easily grow stronger and associations of the kind multiply to include other dishes. But happily, understanding makes it possible for us very often to change the form of the food, to make it unrecognizable or at least modify its texture or appearance for the time being and so make it acceptable. Tomatoes are served as a drink, meat appears as rissoles, vegetables are cooked in soup and sieved before serving, milk is used in cooking such dishes as fish, soups or pudding, or may be disguised in cocoa. After a time the dislike of the original form will probably be completely lost, as the child’s development in other ways goes forward. But even if we overcome these particular difficulties there are still a number of children who dislike not just one or two items—usual enough in the nursery years—but present a general emotional disturbance at mealtime, and the peak of difficulty is usually over dinner. One tends to hold the food in the mouth, another refuses to start eating, and a third fails ever to enjoy a normal meal.

Such difficulties have been known to begin with the earliest days of breast feeding when discomforts of “wind” have distressed or frightened the child. The whole emotional relationship about feeding, however, becomes accentuated in cases where the mother or nurse has failed at weaning time to lead the baby gradually toward independence, taking advantage of his growing perceptions and capacity to imitate.

At six months a baby usually can drink holding his own cup, or at least manage with a minimum of guidance. He will hold a cracker at the same age, and

only a very little later will help himself to fingers of toast or pieces of biscuit from a plate. With a little planning many meals can be made “finger” meals for this age, and if on other occasions a second spoon is placed beside the deep-sided baby plate the child presently recognizes its use and begins taking alternate spoonfuls. At fifteen to eighteen months the toddler manages as a rule quite nicely.

But if in spite of our efforts a child does, perhaps through a setback of illness or some other cause, start on a phase of mealtime difficulty, then it becomes of the utmost help to realize that this is a phase, and school ourselves to avoid showing concern or displeasure if the food is not eaten. We can modify dishes and try as far as possible to prevent meals from ever becoming affairs of tension or scenes. If the child eats but poorly, there are plenty of nourishing drinks that may make good substitutes for a while to lessen our own anxiety. We must look to the general health and freeing of the child’s emotions for the passing of mealtime difficulties as a whole. But very frequently it does help with many children during this phase if they can eat in the company of a few normal contemporaries, for watching the hearty enjoyment of others seems to diminish the anxieties of the fussy child.

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Parents' Questions

STUDY GROUP DEPARTMENT

Cécile Pilpel, Director—Anna W. M. Wolf, Editor

I seem to have failed in one of the most important aspects of child training. My boy, now two and a half years old, simply will not play by himself. Either nurse or I must be in the room with him, and even then he asks what he should do and demands that we do it with him.

All children who develop normally begin to show an interest in manipulation of things in infancy, including their fingers and toes. They shake rattles, they crunch paper, they bang, they like to see things happen, and finally find ways to make things happen themselves. When they begin to walk, larger horizons open up and more things can be tried out, including opening and shutting doors, pulling things down. They show a keen interest in everything about them, as well as in the toys we supply. Children who are given opportunities to try themselves out in this free way usually become absorbed, at least for a time, in some activity regardless of whether anyone is about.

If, however, children are confined to their own quarters, highly regimented, strictly routinized under the continuous care of a nurse, they are likely to get used to having most everything done for them and have little opportunity to fall into natural play ways. There are some children who get their greatest enjoyment out of adult companionship, in being entertained and in being entertaining to visitors. We must make some concessions to this preference. Nevertheless, we must do what we can to stimulate an interest in doing things and a capacity for independence. And we must use ingenuity to capture the child's attention. Water, sand, mud to play in, are as necessary to a small child as food. They are messy, of course, but water at least can be used in the bathroom. Since your child needs a little reeducation to become fully absorbed in play it may be wise to supply these, even at some inconvenience. A sure-fire hit ought to be introduced as a first attempt to help him do without adults.

A visit to a nursery school to observe both materials and methods may give you some suggestions. Simple and safe climbing apparatus in his room, a few steps to go up and down on, large-sized, light-weight blocks, might stimulate his interest in achieving something by himself. Bringing him together with other

children of about the same age may also stimulate his play interests and make him forget, for a little while at least, his dependence on mother or nurse. No child of that age can be left alone for a really long time, but increasingly he can be helped to develop interests which will free him from his dependence on adults.

I have always assumed that children were reasonable beings and that after hearing the whys and wherefores of certain moral rules, they would be willing to conform. Yet I often find myself at a loss with my five-year-old. He enjoys pulling the cat's tail because it hurts. I say, "Helpless animals need our protection," which isn't logic to him. Or, in the matter of truth-telling, I sometimes feel that my ability to detect a falsehood often merely spurs him to greater skill in deceit. Anyway, I don't want him to be truthful just because he's afraid of being caught. I want to build something in him which will make him feel that lies just aren't decent.

You seem to be asking how you can go about developing a real conscience in your child instead of merely policing him into doing what's right. This question does seem to lie at the center of the problem of character development. There are good reasons for telling the truth, even though one suffers, and for being kind to animals, even though it's often fun, when you're very young, to torment them now and then. But the reasons back of our codes about these things are complex and probably can not be understood by the immature mind of a five-year-old.

For a little child conscience is largely a matter of what the adults in his world approve, or disapprove—it is the voice of the parent which becomes the "inner voice" of conscience eventually, and makes itself heard even when the adult is not there. This is why it is important that the adult should express himself and should register his emotional as well as his intellectual reactions. Parents used to overdo the attitude of moral horror with the result that many modern parents have swung far to the other extreme and think they must eliminate all feeling and always be calm and rational. Perhaps the occasional tweak

of a cat's tail is not serious, but repeated and deliberate cruelties could be met with real disgust and condemnation from adults. Let the child see how we feel and he will begin to realize that that's the way "good people" feel and that he must one day feel that way too. Similarly with lies. Even while we expect every child to tell his quota according to his age and the severity of the temptation, the child should discover early that adults, for reasons which he cannot yet entirely understand, have a particularly high regard for truth and a strong feeling about its violation. This does not mean that one gets involved in elaborate explanations—quite the contrary. It usually means allowing oneself, provided we know children and how slow their moral growth is, to act naturally.

From psychiatric sources we hear a great deal about the dangers of burdening a child with feelings of guilt and building too severe a conscience. This is a real danger and should be understood by all parents and teachers. Some children seem more susceptible to guilt feelings than others—just as they are to colds. We must know this and regulate our approach accordingly. But because some tend to become overloaded with guilt is no reason why most healthy children should never feel the weight of genuine disapproval. Conscience is a necessary part of normal personality and it grows, like most things in character, as a result of the particular balance of satisfactions and denials which make up a child's relation to his parents.

How can I teach my nine-year-old son to concentrate? He does not keep his attention on his work at all. Anything serves as a distraction. What can I do to improve his work habits?

I am not at all sure that concentration is a matter of habit or that it can be fostered by direct training. But perhaps your boy needs help of an indirect sort. As you undoubtedly know, attention span develops gradually. In very young children it is extremely short. Individuals vary in this capacity, as in others, but a normal boy of nine should be able to work at one task for a considerable period of time, provided, however, he is interested in what he is doing. Concentration is heavily dependent upon interest.

Do you mean that your boy is unable to concentrate on anything, or does the difficulty arise only in connection with school work? Does he become deeply absorbed when he reads for pleasure or when he is working at some self-imposed task—a puzzle or a collection of his own, for example? If so, one

would suspect that the difficulty lies not in his power of concentration but in lack of interest, or even in some feeling of rebellion against the demands of home or school. His work may be too hard or too easy, he may be discouraged or bored at school, or unhappy there for some other reason; or possibly in your concern you have pressed or nagged him too much and he is resisting in this way. A careful review of the school situation and the family attitude toward school success might suggest the source of the difficulty and the right point of attack.

If, however, you really mean that he can't concentrate on anything, that his attention wanders no matter what the task, the problem is somewhat different. A total inability to concentrate may be the result of a physical difficulty or of emotional problems which are absorbing the child's entire energy and attention. In unravelling such difficulties professional counsel would be desirable.

When my girls were little they often helped me with small household chores, and even seemed to enjoy doing so. I thought this was a way of building habits of cooperation and responsibility in them. But now that I should be able to count on their help—they're eleven and thirteen—they make all kinds of excuses to get out of doing the smallest thing I ask of them. Each complains that she's asked to do more than the other. I find it easier to do the things myself than to have so much bickering, yet I feel this would be bad character training. Wherein has my training failed? And what can I do now to make them more responsible?

It isn't that your training has failed, but rather that children's attitudes change as their needs and interests change. Things which were fun at five have no appeal at eleven and thirteen. Children of this age are likely to be deeply preoccupied with interests of their own and resent anything that encroaches upon their freedom to pursue these interests. There is also a widening of the outside claims upon their time: friendships, clubs, hobbies, homework. You will have to allow for all of these legitimate claims, even if they sometimes conflict with household needs. But this does not mean that the children should have no responsibility in the home. They must be made to realize that the home is a cooperative enterprise where all share the benefits as well as the responsibilities. If yours is a household where most of the chores are done by you and members of the family, you are justified in insisting that the children give a certain amount of help—whether they like it or

not. Make it clear that it is not a question of preference or inclination—that there are certain chores to be done and there is no reason why one person should do all of them unaided. Be as considerate as you can about other claims on their time, unusually heavy homework, special “dates,” parties, and the like. But

make it clear that you expect a similar consideration for yourself. Don’t expect that they will accept all the “necessary evils” of life without some grumbling. All you can hope to do is to get them to recognize the existence of such necessary evils—and their own responsibility toward them.

Suggestions for Study: Habits and Character

TOPICAL OUTLINE

1. LEARNING

How do children learn? Laws of learning; repetition and readiness; satisfaction in the learning process. Is all learning conscious? Importance of application of above principles to learning in the home. Neatness, punctuality, generosity, truthfulness, etc. Are they habits? How are they acquired?

2. EMOTIONAL FACTORS IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Relation between learning and the emotions; family relationships as they affect character. The parents’ relation to each other; to each of their children; brother-sister relationships.

3. GROWING UP

Adolescent needs: conflict between desire for dependence and independence. Common parental mistakes. Boy-girl relationships. Parties. The young person’s responsibility to his family, to his work, to his neighbors.

4. WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY

Jobs in the home—paid and unpaid. Jobs outside the home. Sharing family problems.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When Dick, aged five, came home from a visit in the home of a friend, it was discovered that he had secretly buried in his pocket a small figure of a dog which had caught his fancy. His mother, greatly distressed, called up her friend, who replied that it was of small value and she would be glad to give it to him. Should this be permitted? Should Dick be punished? Should children of this age be expected to be honest and truthful?

2. Jane, aged thirteen, is required to take care of her own room in a home where no help is kept. Nearly every morning her mother finds pajamas under the bed clothes, shoes thrust under the bed, soiled clothes on the closet floor. Should Jane be expected to do better than this at her age? What should her mother do about it?

3. The B. family are in serious financial straits yet the parents feel that if they make personal sacrifices, Kate can continue her dancing class and Bert, aged 19, can have the second-hand car, long promised him. Should they do this? Give reasons.

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Book Reviews

BOOKS ON CHILD TRAINING

DISAGREEMENT among experts is inevitable in any field where thinking has not become stultified, where growth continues. The child training field is no exception to this rule, and we should not be surprised, perhaps, at the conflicting advice with which parents are bombarded in books on child care. But the result for the parent is confusing.

A decade ago the publication of John B. Watson's books popularizing his psychological findings and applying his theories to child education ushered in a period of "child training" literature with a heavy emphasis on the *training*. In Watson's own books, *Behaviorism*, and especially *Psychological Care of Infant and Child*, and in the writings of many of the other educators whom he influenced, complete objectivity and freedom from emotion were pictured as the ideal in parent-child relationships; regularity and consistency were the magic tools. Said Watson, "There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults. Dress them, bathe them with care and circumspection. Let your behavior always be objective and kindly firm. Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say good night. Shake hands with them in the morning. Give them a pat on the head if they have made an extraordinarily good job of a difficult task. Try it out. In a week's time you will find how easy it is to be perfectly objective with your child and at the same time kindly. You will be utterly ashamed of the mawkish, sentimental way you have been handling it." His disciples were as emphatic about hiding anger, grief, or any other emotion from the child. Volumes were written on management procedures—on the importance of objectivity, regularity and consistency. The parent was promised an almost limitless power to create perfection, provided he learned the rules and proceeded accordingly, and thus was loaded with a God-like responsibility which no mere human could stand. Whatever difficulties the child manifested were of the parents' making, and whatever virtues, too.

The child's entire development was visualized as a matter of "conditioning"—and habits accounted for his total personality. Kindness, cheerfulness, honesty,

courage, friendliness, generosity, sympathy, independence, flexibility, and all the other deep-seated emotional attitudes were supposed to be inculcated by routine training. Jealousies, fears, and conflicts were seen solely as the unnecessary results of bad management. While some educators resisted these extreme views, for a while this unqualified behaviorism was rampant and its influences are still with us.

It resulted in the not unnatural assumption that in forming good habits or eliminating bad ones, "the sooner the better." Bowel-and-bladder training were to be begun from the earliest weeks of life. Thumb-sucking, crying for attention, infant masturbation, food refusals were to be ruthlessly stamped out as soon as they appeared lest well-nigh unbreakable habits should result. One recent writer, Elizabeth Hurlock, whose book, *Modern Ways with Babies* (1937), still retains this point of view almost unmodified, even urges mothers to hold their babies' mouths closed when they are learning to chew lest they carry over infantile patterns of eating.

The rôle of natural maturation was almost forgotten. There seemed to be no appreciation of the fact that certain forms of childish behavior serve a useful purpose and should not be interfered with too soon—that they are spontaneously outgrown or readily modified when no longer needed. One wonders why these authors were not afraid to let a baby crawl at ten months for fear that he would form "the habit" and use this form of locomotion for the rest of his life.

Matters were further complicated in many instances by what might be called a laboratory attitude toward learning. Each skill or behavior pattern was thought of as an end in itself to be reached by the most efficient procedure for that end alone.

As late as 1937 Professor Mary T. Whitley suggested in an article on the *Bases of Habit* that since mistakes are costly in learning it is better to show a child exactly what to do and hold him to it than to allow random experimentation as part of learning. In one of the most extreme of the earlier books, *Just Normal Children* (1929), Florence Materer advised parents to tie a child to a heavy piece of furniture for progressively increasing periods of time in order to cure him of the habit of running away; she also suggested lying to him in some situation which would

disappoint him keenly in order to cure him of lying. These examples could be matched by countless others from the more rigid training books. These writers not only ignored the deeper needs behind the behavior they were attacking; they also seemed to forget that a human being learns many things at once, and that his feelings about the person who teaches him, about himself, and about all new experience are very much involved in the process of learning anything.

Procedures were stressed in this literature out of all proportion to their real usefulness. In 1929 Ethel B. Waring and Marguerite Wilker published a book, *The Behavior of Young Children*, which is in a way a monument to the teaching of this period. Each chapter starts with a series of management situations and the parent is invited to distinguish the right from the wrong procedures. Each chapter ends with a series of quotations from the books of the day telling just how such routines should be managed. According to this school of thought the child's development depended on what the parents did or did not do, not on their feeling for the child.

We are still getting plenty of thinking on this level even in some of the most recently published books on child training. Yet surely the additional knowledge which is at hand, both from psychiatric and the psychological studies, should have altered much of it. The findings of Dr. Arnold Gesell and other workers in child development have taught us much concerning the relative rôles of maturation and training, the importance of *readiness* as a condition of learning, and the need for respecting the child's individual rhythm of growth and development. Investigators of the child's emotional life have demonstrated the all-important part played by relationships within the family in determining the child's fundamental character and personality, as well as many of his temporary fears and problems.

Today these attitudes are gradually permeating the child training field and the older extremes are becoming increasingly rare. But in many quarters we find a curious mixture of ideas and philosophies—undigested and unreconciled—which results in inconsistent advice and the tacit or direct denial on one page of what is stated in all good faith on another of the same book. These contradictions are found in the most recent books of otherwise excellent writers who have much to offer parents in terms of practical advice and helpful spirit. There is a kindlier and more humane attitude toward children in the best of these writings, a greater appreciation of the value of warmth and affection, a diminishing rigidity. But the basic and

underlying attitude toward the development of personality remains unchanged.

A widely used and in many ways excellent pamphlet, *Child Management*, written by Dr. Douglas A. Thom and published by the United States Children's Bureau, devotes a whole chapter in its latest 1938 edition to the discussion of the inner drives behind behavior. Yet this same publication tells parents of the importance of instilling "habits of kindness, consideration, and fair play," while utterly ignoring the emotional roots of such personality traits. The 1937 revision of *Child Care and Training*, by Marion L. Faegre and John E. Anderson, discusses the emotional life under a self-contradictory heading, "Emotional Habits," and attempts to reduce the whole problem of sound emotional development to a matter of simple conditioning.

In many of these books fear and anger responses are the only primitive drives admitted and all the later emotional patterns are supposed to be built around their original conditioning. "Anger and fear, as here described," says Dr. William E. Blatz, in his latest book, "are thus the generic foundations for all later adult emotions." The love reactions which are so all-pervading in the life of the small child and in the whole problem of emotional maturing are tacitly denied, and there is, again and again in these books, an attempt to explain as mere "curiosity" or "attention-getting behavior" much that has infinitely deeper significance for the child. This tendency results, too, in oversimplification of the problems of jealousy, fear and anger. Only the externally conditioning factors are admitted. The rôle of inner conflict is usually ignored and parents are left with the foolhardy expectation that good management will totally eliminate these problems.

But perhaps an even more serious result of the failure to accept the full implications of current knowledge of emotional development is the readiness with which the kindest of these authorities—often those most concerned with a gentle form of discipline for the runabout child—will advise the most ruthless imposition of severe frustrations on the infant. They are quite ready to impose iron-clad feeding schedules which take no account of the child's individual rhythm and to suggest starvation as a weaning measure, "crying it out" from infancy on, and the earliest possible training in elimination. Yet it has been pointed out repeatedly by psychiatrists that interfering with his infantile desires about eating, elimination, and the comforting presence of his mother imposes on the baby his first and all-important experience of

discipline. This is the point at which gentleness and consideration are most necessary. Yet many books by well-known educators and pediatricians continue to give advice which ignores these facts.

There are, however, some excellent child training books addressed to young parents which do seem to us to apply the newer findings about children's developmental processes—books such as Dr. Gesell's *Feeding Behavior of Infants*, Dr. and Mrs. C. Anderson Aldrich's *Babies Are Human Beings*, Susan Isaacs' *The Nursery Years*, Rose Alschuler's *Two to Six*, Erwin Wexberg's *Our Children in a Changing World*, Harriet Johnson's *School Begins at Two* and *Children in the Nursery School*, and many of the publications of the Child Study Association, especially *Parents' Questions*. Unquestionably there is much that we still do not know about emotional life and human maturation and many problems concerning which the best thinking is still tentative. But there is also a great deal of

established knowledge which is still far from fully digested and applied, and only confusion results from half-hearted attempts to modernize the older habit-training approach.

We have a right to expect today that books of advice to parents shall be aimed at freeing them to enjoy their children and love them instead of preaching a tense and overcontrolled relationship; that they shall not concentrate on the minutiae of daily routines and procedures, but shall instead set such matters in their proper perspective as tools which may be useful. To be helpful these books must recognize clearly that the quality of the parent-child relationship is all-important and that it is inextricably bound up with the whole training process; they must admit freely that all children have problems and difficulties which parents can help to resolve but for which they need not always feel full responsibility.

HELEN G. STERNAU

Children's Books

STORIES MADE-TO-ORDER FOR YOUNG READERS

CAN commercial publishers afford to regard children as the ultimate consumers of juvenile publications, or must publishers consider the fact that books for children are sold primarily to adults in schools and libraries, or over the counter? And even if commercial publishers wished to find out what the children themselves want, how could they, since the children are not their "buying public"?

Some publishers of juveniles have experimented with "little editors" who have written book reviews for twenty-five cents each. The father of one of these children warned a publisher that his quarter would be wasted on the review of a manuscript which mentioned a horse. His child loved horses so much that any story about them would be rated tops. From one point of view these quarters for individual "reviews" may have been wasted. But if it were possible to discover what hundreds, even thousands of children would like to read, that might be news.

This is exactly what the WPA Project called "Developing New Reading Materials" has attempted to do. Since school opened last September 149,873 made-to-order books have been loaned to 326 public schools of Greater New York and certain recreation and welfare organizations. These books were literally

"made to order"—being written and illustrated to meet needs and desires and criticisms actually expressed by the children themselves. Each book was carefully tested with its young audience, both during and after its writing.

The books are paper-bound, a little larger in size than the *Readers Digest*. Their appeal to the eye is such that many children who are not fond of reading are stimulated to turn the pages to look at pictures, which eventually whet their curiosity to the point of wanting to know what the story tells. So, with the help of a controlled vocabulary, a step in voluntary practice of reading is taken. A small book may be finished before it becomes an old story or a part of the daily routine tasks. No grade designation appears on this supplementary reading material: children who cannot read books which are marked for their own grade with ease will not spontaneously choose books which bear a grade mark humiliatingly below their chronological age. This difference between chronological age and reading level is a problem among underprivileged children, especially in districts where a foreign language or poor English is spoken at home and there is little stimulus toward reading.

The WPA supplementary reading material is filling a real need in the public schools by helping to convince children that reading is not just a required task; that reading may be fun. Public libraries, however excellent, are not within walking distance for all

school children. And both carfare and shoe leather are serious problems in many homes. But even the child who is able to reach a library is not always able to be reached by it. He may have outgrown the *Little Red Hen* yet be unable to cope with the vocabulary of stories whose contents would interest him if he could read them easily. Such books as *Treasure Island*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Moby Dick* may still be beyond him. He cannot read the books that he would find thrilling, yet he will not read voluntarily anything which he considers too babyish, or in which he finds no thrills. The WPA stories have sought to meet this very real problem by offering lively, exciting stories using a simple vocabulary.

Must children have thrills with their reading? Parents object that, in the good old days, "thrillers" were forbidden to children. But we have to remember that the taste of today's children is conditioned by the movies and the radio. "Hi-O-Silver" echoes in our crowded city streets. Toy pistols are snapped by little gang busters and Junior "G" Men. Vicarious thrills are the portion of those who have to take even their sports over the air instead of in it. The influence of the movies has been shown in a survey of the reading preferences of children, conducted in connection with the "Developing New Reading Materials" project. When *Mutiny on the Bounty* was being shown in neighborhood theaters children frequently commented upon it as a tale of thrilling adventure, while they ignored the shocking cruelty which distressed many adults.

Children often seem to overlook human suffering in stories if the circumstances are exciting. In one of the WPA stories, which many children said was "as good as a movie," the hero blew up an attacking pirate ship to save his pirate friends on the *Bloody Bess*. None of the young readers asked whether any pirates were hurt in the explosion; but many of them wanted to be reassured about the safety of the hero's dog which was left to swim ashore at the end of Part I. Fan mail came from a school asking the author to visit them and tell his public what happened to the dog and also to Tom Coe's mother and nurse. The appeal of this story was so strong that, in one class where reading was not popular, the teacher said she had to drive the children out at lunch time and after school when they begged to be allowed to stay and finish reading it.

A survey made two and a half years ago listed the type of words used by children in describing their reading preferences. This showed that a definite majority preferred books which furnished excitement,

thrills and adventure in some form. Funny stories are always liked if children find them really amusing, but as one school principal said, "Remember the children are not humorists. They just like to laugh." What makes them laugh? Slapstick which has served generations of clowns is still new and delightful to new generations of children. The repetition of phrases which are not in themselves side-splitting when used for the first time, becomes funnier when the effect is cumulative.

Preference for fairy tales was in the minority in this survey, made two and a half years ago. Only children in the lower grades, or those who were not well adjusted to reality, asked for them. But last June a surprising number of letters mentioned "Snow White" as a special favorite. Many of these older children would have considered such stories too babyish till the charm of Walt Disney's version made its appeal to people of all ages.

Thus, if we will allow them, children will tell us in no uncertain terms what they really want in their reading. The next step is to write and publish books which will meet these preferences. This WPA project has shown that it can be done.

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News and Notes

A Cooperative Venture The Parent-Teacher Association of Palisade, New Jersey, offered a prize for the best letter covering the need for parent education in its community and suggestions for improving its work. We are pleased to announce that the prize offered—"an inspiration," according to the local chairman, was admission (for both husband and wife) to a course of evening lectures on Adolescence now being given at the Child Study Association. The winning letter, written by Mrs. Robert F. Britton, suggested that the local Parent-Teacher Association should offer parents more help in the problem of "Understanding Ourselves." As a result, this organization has arranged for series of four evening lectures in Palisade by members of the Child Study Association staff, to be followed by four afternoons of individual local conferences with a member of our Family Consultation Service. Cooperation of this kind with other educational and community agencies is an important and ever-growing aspect of the Association's work.

Parent-Teacher Activities Parent-Teacher Associations throughout the country will be interested in a recently published pamphlet, "Parent-Teacher Activities at Lincoln School," by Edith Rossbach. The pamphlet is the work of the parent group, with the cooperation of the school staff. It is offered to the public in the hope that it may encourage the growth of such activities throughout the country. It covers: organization, school-centered activities, parent-centered activities, and community-centered activities. There is little published material for the use of such groups and this pamphlet should meet a real need. Copies are 50 cents, and may be obtained from the Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City.

Democracy and the Curriculum The John Dewey Society has requested educational organizations throughout the country to set up temporary groups to discuss the thesis presented in its Third Yearbook, "Democracy and the Curriculum: The Life and Program of the School." The results of these local discussions will be brought together as a basis for further study at the Society's Annual Meeting, to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, February 26. The Child Study

Association has, accordingly, called together interested members of its Schools Committee to cooperate in this project and three discussion meetings have been held under the leadership of Mrs. Franklin E. Parker, Jr., its former chairman.

Course for Community Workers A special series of discussion meetings for parent education leaders, teachers, and social workers active in underprivileged areas will be held at the Headquarters of the Child Study Association, 221 West 57th Street, for six consecutive Thursday afternoons at 4:30, beginning February 2.

Mrs. Jean Schick Grossman will lead the discussions. The group is particularly interested in discussing problems of content and method in parent education programs for such areas. Its first organization meeting was attended by representatives of day nurseries, WPA nursery schools, settlements, play schools, housing developments, and other community agencies. Topics for discussion which seemed to arouse the greatest interest included: special problems and difficulties of parents arising from social and economic deprivations; the use of individual interviews; meeting needs through group work; techniques of leadership; mother-father relationships as affected by unemployment and similar problems.

February Conferences The Progressive Education Association announces a series of consultation meetings as a new feature of its National Conference which will be held in Detroit, February 22 to 25. These will be informal groups, led by authorities in the field, at which teachers and administrators are invited to present for general discussion current problems on which they are working. Topics for the more formal sessions of the Conference include: The International Program of Progressive Education; Parent Relationships; Regional Differences in America; and Current Practices in Progressive Schools. The National Council of Parent Education will hold its Sixth Biennial Conference in Detroit at about the same time, February 20-23. Mrs. Sidonie Gruenberg, Director of the Child Study Association, will serve as chairman of one of its sessions on, "What Lies Ahead for American Family Life?" and will be co-speaker with Mr. Lee White at another devoted to "The Publicity Angle of Family Life Education."

In the Magazines

Prejudice and Education. By Kimball Young. *The Education Digest*, January, 1939.

"Prejudice is not a matter of instinctive fear, dislike or hatred. These reactions rest on early training." It grows out of the struggle between the "in-group" (we) and the "out-group" (they). "Although the foundations of prejudice are chiefly laid down in the home during early life, the school has a definite part in the process. In spite of our democratic ideals of equality, the school has tended to reflect nationalistic, community, and class standards in these matters of we-group superiority." Suggestions are made for changes in school method and curriculum to aid in overcoming prejudice.

Guiding Mental Development. By Beth L. Wellman. *Childhood Education*, November, 1938.

Experimental evidence is cited which leads this investigator to conclude that IQ may be increased or lowered by the environment of the child. She contends that children gain mentally through mental exercise. By this she does not mean drill but the opportunity for a life rich in experiences.

Progressive Education, January, 1939.

Third in a series of issues on Adolescence, this is devoted to Adolescents in College. Articles cover guidance programs, "women's right to a right education," new college values, college as transition, and similar subjects.

Sex Education in Secondary Schools. By Benjamin C. Gruenberg. *Journal of Social Hygiene*, December, 1938.

Inquiries directed to heads of high schools throughout the country in 1920 and 1927, requesting information on the status of sex education, showed a definite need for a well-planned course given by well-trained teachers.

Some Babies Train Themselves. By Evelyn Emig Mellon. *Parents' Magazine*, January, 1939.

An up-to-date article on toilet training which takes exception to arbitrary, rigid procedures and stresses readiness and the avoidance of conflict.

Should He Read in First Grade? By James V. Williams. *Parents' Magazine*, January, 1939.

A specialist in reading problems explains the reasons for postponing the teaching of reading.

ON HABITS

(Continued from page 119)

esteem of the donor and a pain in the neck to the recipient if he is intelligent enough to say to himself "If I had guessed that *this* was all they thought of a year's work, I wouldn't have tried.") Nor would we penalize mistakes by punishment, because then we would be inhibiting initiative and smothering interest. Heigh-ho—another one answered.

(5) Now here, Cécile, I *know* your tongue is in your cheek. *You* don't consider neatness a virtue, nor do you include neatness and independence in the same category as personality or character traits. However, I'll take the question at its face value. In the first place, patterns of behavior of a complex nature cannot be acquired without practice. You and I have tried golf, sewing, cooking, riding, swimming, lecturing and courtesy (at least *you* have the latter), and how we had to practice!

How early one must begin any task depends on (a) native intelligence, (b) development of judgment. The learning of reading, for instance, is begun at about the level of six years (Mental Age), or when the child can understand that the wiggles on the page are not things in themselves but symbols which may convey meanings.

But then there is the question as to whether it is worth while teaching a child a certain pattern of behavior. Surely all children should not learn to play the violin. (Or should they?) All children should not learn to lecture. (Think what the world would be like—and what would we do for a job?) We must always distinguish in our discussion between what to *teach* a child and what a child *learns*. Often the teaching doesn't "take." Learning always "takes."

Now then, re *neatness* (which between ourselves I think is a much over-rated accomplishment): Obviously a certain amount of system is necessary if one wishes to accomplish any task, whether it be in a workshop, a kitchen, a studio, or just thinking. I think that example and experience, without formal instruction, is far more efficacious with reference to this trait. One achieves the degree of neatness commensurate with one's anticipated goals. (Some people like to plough through, e.g. a football player.) By this means one is often rather objectionable to one's family, friends, colleagues, and others. In this case isolation works wonders (either oneself or the colleagues). And so, perhaps, with truthfulness!

Independence and responsibility are more complex patterns requiring a good deal more opportunity for

practice, and should begin at birth, or better at the birth of the parents. The principles are the same, however.

(6) I have a confession to make. I don't know the role of "identification" in character development. I don't even know what identification is. Now you write me a letter and tell me.

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W. B.



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HABITS BELONG TO CHILDREN

(Continued from page 113)

these activities we must depend for our clues upon the growth of motor coordination. When his two hands are able to reach out and seize the bottle, the four-months-old baby is ready to begin self-feeding. At about eight months he can and should be given the opportunity to manipulate the cup. An empty cup placed upon his tray at this time will allow him to practice. If he has been allowed to grow into this habit, as soon as he is successful in drinking from the cup the bottle will be dispensed with by the baby himself. Instead of clinging to it, he usually throws it on the floor.

After he is eight months old, spoon manipulation is eagerly attempted by every baby and an extra spoon should always be on hand for his use at meals. This job requires so much manual dexterity, however, that it takes months of effort to get the spoon right side up into his mouth. His early clumsiness will gradually give way to accurate feeding some time between eighteen and twenty-four months. In all these difficult changes in his eating ways, our tolerance of his labors will be his most steady factor.

In the life of a baby, sleep is also a high point for habit formation. At birth, however, we find that, unlike eating and eliminating, sleep is already habitual. The newly born baby has perfect sleep habits. He sleeps all the time except when roused for feeding or bathing, and it is these early activities which train him to stay awake.

His sleep schedule, then, should logically be organized around his increasing ability to take part in the life around him. In making changes in his regime we can be guided by the progressive maturing of his eating program, allowing also for gradual expansion in his interests, as his social abilities develop. The key to a baby's sleep habits lies in the recognition that sleep is not an end in itself but, as with adults, a means to a more vigorous existence.

These few examples of a young child's simplest activities may help to illustrate that sound training in any essential habit depends upon the ability to recognize and use developmental clues as they come along. It is, of course, impossible for parents to master all the strategic points in early development, in spite of every mother's intimate knowledge of her own baby. And so, for an understanding of these countless steps in growth, the physician who supervises the individual child must be responsible.

Nevertheless, in this developmental attitude toward the training of children, the parental rôle, as we have seen, is in no sense a passive one. It is far simpler, in fact, to apply rigid training instructions than it is to be intelligently responsive to the needs of growth. It is not without meaning, however, that the human developmental plan calls for the responsive and fostering assistance of adults if it is to operate successfully. Without our constant support in this venture, a child is seriously handicapped.

But, as physicians see again and again, the parent who is willing to be sympathetic to the baby's own rhythms, to enjoy his gratifying experiences with him, and to be attentive to developmental clues as he grows, will have the pleasure of cooperating in a form of training which will lead to competent and satisfying habits.

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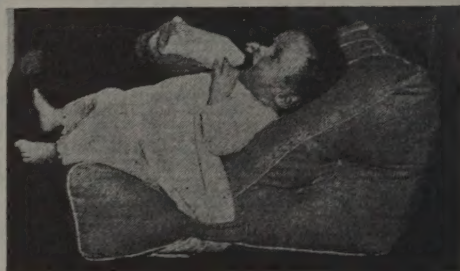
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